

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ACCRA 5632

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, PGOV, GH

SUBJ: COMMISSIONER GARDINER'S VIEW S ON GHANA'S POLITICAL
SITUATION

REF: ACCRA 5447

1. SUMMARY: ON JULY 21 COMMISSIONER FOR ECONOMIC PLANNING GARDINER TOLD AMBASSADOR THAT TACT AND PATIENCE WAS NEEDED BY BOTH DISSIDENT PROFESSIONALS AND GOG TO WORK OUT TRANSITION TO CIVILIAN RULE. HE NOTED GOG HAD AGREED ONLY TO EXAMINE "POSSIBILITIES" OF ONE YEAR TRANSITION AND ADDED THAT DUE TO ADMINISTRATIVE PROBLEMS IT WOULD BE UNLIKELY THAT PROCESS COULD BE COMPLETED IN SUCH A SHORT PERIOD. HE SAID FOOD SHORTAGES REMAIN GHANA'S FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEM BUT CLAIMED THAT SLIGHTLY BETTER RAINFALL, GOG FOOD PURCHASES AND EMERGENCY FOOD AID HAVE EASED FOOD SITUATION. END SUMMARY.

2. ACCOMPANIED BY DCM, I CALLED ON COMMISSIONER FOR ECONOMIC PLANNING ROBERT GARDINER JULY 21 FOR A REVIEW OF RECENT DEVELOPMENTS PRIOR TO MY RETURNING TO WASHINGTON. DR. GARDINER, EXHAUSTED FROM HIS RECENT
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LABORS BUT AS WARM AND AFFABLE AS EVER, BEGAN BY ASKING ME TO CONVEY TO AID ADMINISTRATOR GILLIGAN AND ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR BUTCHER HIS APPRECIATION FOR AID'S ASSISTANCE TO GHANA. HE CONTINUED TO HOPE FOR U.S. UNDERSTANDING AND SUPPORT, FOR HE RECOGNIZED THAT GHANA'S PROBLEMS WERE NOT AMENABLE TO IMMEDIATE SOLUTIONS. I ASSURED HIM THAT OUR EFFORTS TO BE

HELPFUL WOULD CONTINUE AND THAT WE IN TURN WERE GRATEFUL FOR HIS COOPERATION.

3. TURNING TO DOMESTIC POLITICAL SITUATION, I MENTIONED THE RECENT DESIGNATION OF DR. GARDINER AND ATTORNEY GENERAL KORANTENG-ADDOW AS THE GOG PRINCIPALS IN ITS NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION (REFTEL). ALTHOUGH I REGRETTED THE ADDITIONAL PRESSURES THAT THIS RESPONSIBILITY WOULD PLACE UPON HIM, I WAS GRATIFIED THAT HE HAD AGREED TO UNDERTAKE IT AND ASKED HOW HE SAW THE SITUATION DEVELOPING. HE SAID THAT WHAT WAS NEEDED NOW MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE WAS A COOLING OF TEMPER AND A CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT OF TACT AND PATIENCE ON BOTH SIDES. HE CITED (AS CHAIRMAN ACHEAMPONG HAD DONE IN LAST WEEK'S CONVERSATION WITH ME) THE DANGERS OF A PREMATURE HANDOVER BY THE SMC. HE SAID THERE WERE HOT HEADS ON BOTH SIDES, MENTIONING "YOUNG DOCTORS" AMONG THE PROFESSIONALS WHO WERE PRESSING FOR AN EARLY STEP-DOWN BY THE SMC AND YOUNG ARMY OFFICERS AND NCO'S WHO WERE NOW PRESSURING THE SMC TO TAKE A MUCH FIRMER LINE WITH PROFESSIONALS OR RISK A VIOLENT REACTION BY THE ARMED FORCES. TO ILLUSTRATE THE LATTER POINT, DR. GARDINER SHOWED ME A FLYER PREPARED BY A GROUP WITHIN THE MILITARY CALLING ITSELF THE "REVOLUTIONARY BRIGADE." THE DOCUMENT, WHICH WE HAD ALREADY SEEN, BITTERLY CONFIDENTIAL

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CONDEMNED THE RECENT STRIKE BY PROFESSIONALS AND THE CRITICISM LEVELED AT THE MILITARY AND WARNED OF BLUNTER AND MORE EFFECTIVE MEASURES AGAINST THE PROFESSIONALS IF THEY DID NOT DESIST.

4. I SYMPATHIZED WITH DR. GARDINER'S BEING CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF THESE PRESSURES AND ASKED ABOUT THE WIDESPREAD RUMORS IN ACCRA THAT SOME SORT OF COMPROMISE HAD BEEN REACHED BETWEEN THE PROFESSIONALS AND THE GOVERNMENT WHICH WOULD SHORTEN THE PROPOSED TWO YEAR TRANSITION TO CIVILIAN RULE TO ONE YEAR. DR. GARDINER SAID HE HAD HEARD THE SAME RUMOR AND CONFIRMED THAT THE PROFESSIONALS WERE PRESSING FOR THIS. HE ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD AGREED ONLY "TO EXAMINE THE POSSIBILITIES OF SUCH A MOVE." HE WENT ON TO PREDICT THAT IT WOULD NOT IN FACT BE POSSIBLE TO "DO THE NECESSARY" WITHIN ONE YEAR AND THAT SOME OF THE "POLITICAL TYPES" WHO WERE NOW PRESSING THE HARDEST FOR THIS WOULD IN SIX MONTHS TIME BE ASKING INSTEAD FOR AN EXTENSION OF TIME. HE FELT THAT THEY WOULD EVENTUALLY CONCLUDE THAT MORE--NOT LESS--TIME WOULD BE REQUIRED IN ORDER

TO MAKE ALL THE NECESSARY ARRANGEMENTS FOR FREE
ELECTIONS, SELECTION OF CANDIDATES, CAMPAIGNING, ETC.

5. DR. GARDINER REMAINS CONVINCED THAT THE MOST
FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEM FACING GHANA IS THE SHORTAGE OF
FOOD. THIS, HE FELT, WAS AN IMPORTANT CAUSE OF
THE ORIGINAL STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS IN MAY AND COULD
SPARK TROUBLE AGAIN UNLESS IT WAS SOLVED. THE GOG
WAS THEREFORE NOW PURCHASING ADDITIONAL FOOD SUPPLIES
UNDER COMMERCIAL ARRANGEMENTS. THESE PURCHASES,
CUPLED WITH SOMEWHAT BETTER RAINFALL THIS YEAR
THAN LAST AND EMERGENCY FOOD PROVIDED BY U.S. AND
OTHER DONORS, WOULD EASE THE FOOD SHORTAGES SINGNIFICANTLY.
AS THE GOOD SITUATION IMPROVED, HE FELT THAT THE
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POLITICAL PRESSURES IN TURN WOULD LESSEN, PERMITTING
COLLER HEADS TO PREVAIL.

6. COMMENT: WHILE SOME OF THE PROFESSIONALS STILL
BELIEVE THEY WILL BE ABLE TO SHORTEN TRANSITION PERIOD
FROM TWO YEARS TO ONE, WETHINK THIS UNLIKELY IN
LIGHT OF THEIR DISORGANIZATION, THE STIFFENING
ATTITUDE OF THE MILITARY AND GARDINER'S OWN COMENTS.
MANY PROFESSIONALS ANGRILY ACCUSE THE SMC OF
RENEGING ON ITS "AGREEMENT" TO STEP DOWN WITHIN ONE
YEAR, BUT UNLESS ACHEAMPONG STUMBLES VERY BADLY IT
IS HARD TO SEE HOW THEY CAN GIN UP ANOTHER STRIKE
SEVERE ENOUGH TO FORCE GOG TO SPEED UP TIMETABLE.
FOR TIME BEING, THEREFORE, PROGNOSIS IS FOR PROTRACTED
NEGOTIATIONS TOWARD AN EVENTUAL TRANSFER OF POWER
TO A NEW REGIME IN WHICH CIVILIANS ARE EITHER DOMINANT
OR HEAVILY REPRESENTED. HOWEVER, SMC WILL CONTINUE
TO CONTROL NOT ONLY PACE OF TRANSITION BUT ALSO
WILL DETERMINE WHICH POLITICAL ALTERNATIVES WILL
BE PRESENTED TO GHANAINS. FOR THEIR PART,
PROFESSIONALS WILL CONTINUE TO PRESS THEIR CASE BUT
WILL PROBABLY HAVE TO RELY MORE ON FRIENDLY
PERSUASION THAN ON FRIENDLY
PERSUASION THAN ON THREAT OF NEW STIKES.
SMITH

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